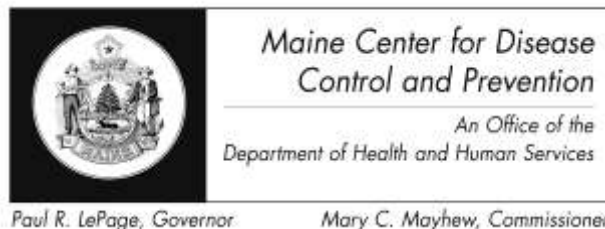


Babesiosis

Fact Sheet



What is babesiosis?

Babesiosis is a potentially severe tick-borne disease caused by a parasite that infects red blood cells.

How is babesiosis transmitted?

Babesiosis is transmitted by the bite of an infected deer tick. The longer a tick remains attached and feeding, the higher the likelihood that it may transmit the parasite. The tick must generally be attached for at least 24 to 36 hours before it can transmit the disease. The tick is carried by deer, deer mice and other small mammals. This is the same type of tick that can transmit anaplasmosis and Lyme disease. Deer ticks are capable of transmitting more than one of these diseases in a single bite. Transmission can also occur through the transfusion of contaminated blood. Blood donors without symptoms may be able to pass the disease for as long as 12 months after the initial infection. A few possible cases of mother-to-infant transmission have been reported.

What are the symptoms of babesiosis?

Babesiosis can cause fever, fatigue and anemia lasting several days to several months. Some individuals may get babesiosis and not show any sign of the disease.

When do symptoms appear?

Signs and symptoms of babesiosis can start within a week or so after exposure. They usually develop within a few weeks or months, sometimes longer.

How is babesiosis diagnosed?

Diagnosis of babesiosis requires a blood test.

What is the treatment for babesiosis?

Babesiosis can be treated with antibiotics prescribed by your doctor. Serious complications requiring a blood transfusion and/or kidney dialysis can occur if the disease is not recognized and treated early.

Who gets babesiosis?

Anyone can get babesiosis but it occurs most frequently in the elderly, in individuals without a healthy spleen and in individuals whose immune systems are impaired. Human cases of this disease have been reported in the northeastern United States with most occurring during late spring, summer and fall.

How can I protect my family and myself from getting babesiosis?

The best way to prevent babesiosis and other tick-borne illnesses is to avoid contact with ticks. If you are working, playing, or relaxing in areas that may have ticks you should do the following:

- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants. Light colored clothing makes it easier to spot ticks.
- Tuck your pants into your socks and tuck your shirt into your pants.
- Use an EPA approved insect repellent such as DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Permethrin can be used on clothing, shoes, bed nets, and camping gear. Always follow the product labels. For more information on repellents, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/RepellentUpdates.htm>.
- Check your clothing and skin carefully after being outdoors and remove ticks immediately.
- If bitten by a tick, wash area of bite thoroughly with soap and water and apply an antiseptic to area of the bite.
- Keep your lawn mowed, cut overgrown brush, and clear away leaf litter from your home.
- Inspect any pets daily and remove any ticks found.

How should I properly remove a tick?

To remove a tick that has attached to the skin, grasp the tick with a pair of tweezers as close as possible to the skin. Pull straight out without twisting motions. Avoid squeezing or puncturing the body of the tick because it may contain infectious fluids. After tick removal, wash the bite site and your hands with soap and water and apply a disinfectant or an antibiotic ointment to the site.

I was recently bitten by a tick and want to have it identified. Where should I send the tick?

You can have a tick identified by sending it to the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID Lab. For specific instructions on how to submit a tick please visit UMaine Cooperative Extension's website: <http://extension.umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/>

Babesiosis in Maine

For more information on the number of babesiosis cases reported in Maine, please visit Maine CDC's website:

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ddc/epi/vector-borne/babesiosis/index.shtml>.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website <http://www.cdc.gov> is another excellent source of health information.